

REPORT OF THE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE

In the autumn of 2003, the Downtown Revitalization Committee (DRC), a sub-committee of the Board of Selectmen was formed with the primary goal of selecting a project in the downtown area of Alton where improvements would revitalize the village for the enjoyment of the townspeople and visitors alike. The DRC is comprised of six volunteers and a representative from the Board of Selectmen.

The area adjacent to Depot Street offered such an opportunity – the former Boston & Maine Railroad Yard is now re-named the Alton B&M Railroad Park. The DRC began working towards its goal, on this Town-owned property, during the fall of 2003. Taking one step at a time with seed money voted during Town Meeting 2004, the committee hired a historic architect, held a Town-wide Charrette, and produced a brochure for the purpose of raising funds and raising awareness of the project.

Starting with its natural setting, a major project of clearing brush away, selected trees, accumulated “leftovers” from past projects, clearing out the freight building and removal of a small garage, occupied many weeks of work this past year – done by committee members and volunteers.

In the spring, a mailing of 3200 brochures was completed through the generosity of the “Main Street” newspaper Board of Directors. DRC committee members also gave project presentations before several town organizations. Colorful storyboards were displayed – courtesy of many businesses, Gilman Library and Town Hall, a successful raffle was held in August during the Rotary Club Barber shoppers Musical Weekend.

Late spring and several summer months saw the transformation of the 1862 Freight Building, badly damaged years ago, from an adjacent freight building fire. Rejuvenation included replacing sections of the roof, trim, shingles, clapboards, and vertical boards. Fresh coats of paint in the B&M colors, cream and red, cover the east and west sides of the building – the gable end of the building will likewise be done in 2006. A highlight of the project was relocating the 1921 Laconia built Caboose to its permanent site, the west side of the Freight building. This fall project, October, was an exciting event starting with the arrival of a huge crane from Dover. The townspeople and press arrived early in the morning carrying cameras to record the event for history – four hours later the job was finished with the crew and spectators enjoying a cookout following a busy morning.

Raising funds for each component of the Park is an on going process throughout the year. Following months of applying for grants, the DRC received welcome news the committee was the recipient of a \$5,000 grant from the Meredith Village Savings Bank. These funds will be applied toward the Wetland Board Walk – the permit for this project was granted by the Department of Environmental Services this past June.

Additional funds from the Clough/Morrell Trust Fund will be applied toward the Walking Path, which will be from Depot Street to Old Wolfeboro Road. A toddler’s playground with a train theme – requires fund raising activities, as well as funds to

complete the Freight Building, Walking Path, lighting and landscaping are among the goals for 2006.

Numerous donors, businesses, donors-in-kind, Highway Department, Transfer Station, Town Hall Employees, volunteers and the committee members have given generously to the park project. We thank each one for their thoughtfulness and generosity.

Townpeople and visitors are welcome to visit the Park site in the village. The Park entrance is easily identified by the beautiful new sign.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judy Fry
Judy Fry, Chairman
Bonnie Barsanti
Marty Cornelissen
Norman Crawford
Nancy Merrill
Deanna O'Shaughnessy

A. Pete Shibley, Selectmen's Representative
Thomas Varney, Planning Board Representative
Kathy Menici, Town Planner Advisor
Russell Bailey, Town Administrator Advisor

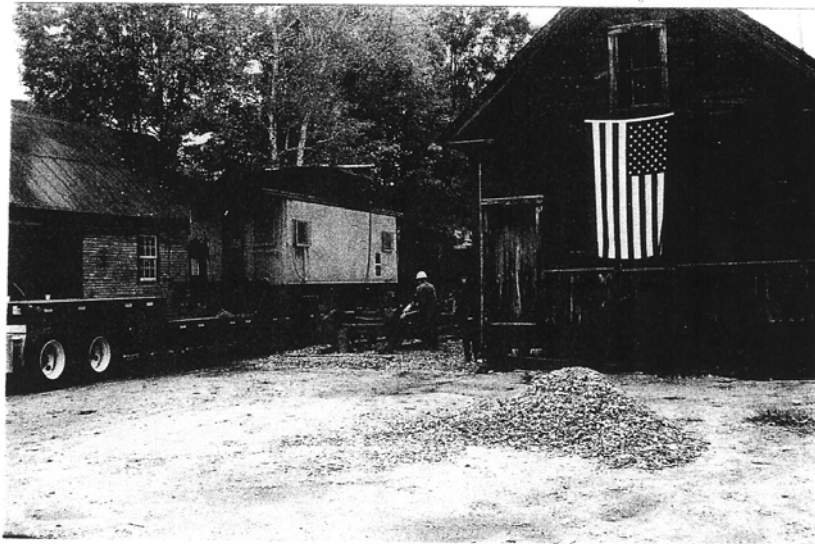


Photo by Marty Cornelissen